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Correspondence, Fred B. Smith, John C. Stennis, August 19-25, 1958

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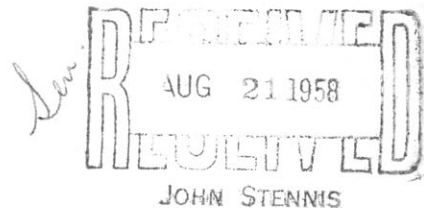
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FRED B. SMITH
ATTORNEY AT LAW
RIPLEY, MISS.

August 19, 1958

WASHINGTON OFFICE

Senator John Stennis
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.



Dear Senator Stennis:

I am taking the liberty of writing you for your reaction and advice on a matter.

This morning someone connected with the newly created Civil Rights Department or Commission, called me from Washington, and stated that under this new law it was provided that an Advisory Committee of five people be set up in each state, and asked me to serve on this Advisory Commission.

I followed the splendid fight that you and other Southern Senators and Congressmen made against the enactment of this law. Of course, we are all against it, and I told this man, who called me, that I would want him to know that I was not sympathetic to the organization. Now, the question is, should I, or should I not accept a place on this committee. Of course, my thinking on these matters is along the same lines as those of our Southern Senators and Representatives who oppose this measure, but since there is such an organization, and since there is a provision for such a committee, what, in your judgment should be my attitude towards accepting such appointment.

I told the party who called me that it would be a matter to which I would have to devote some thought, and told him to write me in more detail as to the duties relative to such a committee.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would write me frankly in this regard, in order that I may determine whether I would be in a better position to help by accepting this appointment, or rejecting it.

Thanking you for this service, I am, with kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

Fred B. Smith

FBS:s

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Letter to Fred Smith, dictated by Senator on August 22:

You are one of the foremost men in the State to serve.

Apparently there will be an advisory group from each State to serve for Commission.

Frankly, however, you will have to prepare yourself to be largely ignored because it is such a political issue. But if those in the Southern group or from the South could agree on something to stand on, rather uniformly, perhaps this might have some retarding influence.

This was the thinking of those of us who knew him that was responsible for our interest in Governor John Battle, Charlottesville, serving on the Commission.

Mississippi will certainly be putting its best foot forward in having you serve. Do not say this in flattery ~~XXX~~ at all, but say it as an assurance to you.

JS/11

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

HARRY L. WINGATE, JR., CHIEF CLERK

August 25, 1958

Memorandum on call to Fred Smith
Ripley.

Was unable to reach Mr. Smith by telephone until today.

He was disappointed that he had missed the Senator's calls on Saturday and Sunday, but he said that he had been out of town.

Mr. Smith appreciated the Senator's interest in trying to reach him on this important matter. He said that in the light of information which he had received regarding the Advisory Panel, Civil Rights Commission, he had just about decided to decline to serve because he felt that the service of any Mississippian as a member of this group would be misunderstood by 95% of the people.

I advised Mr. Smith that the Senator was of course opposed to the creation of this group, and that he had said he would not have anything to do with it. However, that if there was to be such a group appointed, it certainly should be composed of outstanding Mississippians, men of reason and ability, and that the Senator felt that Mr. Smith was certainly one of the foremost men in the State.

Mr. Smith appreciated the feelings of the Senator and said that he would keep this in mind after he had heard further from the people who contacted him. He said he had written to ask for additional information as to the authority and duties of the members of this group, but he had not yet heard.

Mr. Smith advised that the other four people being asked to serve were:

Oliver Emmerich
Rex Brown
Harry Carpenter (Rilling Fork)
and Dr. Lawrence Jones, Piney Woods.

WEC/11